

Globe (Blanche) Mill
605 12th Street
Augusta
Richmond County
Georgia

HAER No. GA-9

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: 605 12th Street
Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia

Date of Construction: 1876; rebuilt 1880
Additions: c. 1900, c. 1940

Present Owner: David Silver
Phoenix, Arizona

Present Use: Warehouse

Significance: The Globe Mill, the oldest standing textile mill in Augusta, has been totally surrounded by new additions, thus showing the malleability of industrial buildings. The mill used water power from the Augusta Canal until 1972, when the mill shut down.

Historian: Robert L. Spude, 1977

The industrial complex sprawling across the lots bounded by the second and third levels of the August Canal and 12th and 13th Streets gives the appearance of disarray. Some would call it ugly. Yet, the buildings, when examined closer, reflect the growth of Augusta's textile industry. Inside the four walls of the mill and under its ceiling stand four hidden walls and another roof line. These once housed the Globe Mill, a two-story brick spinning mill constructed during the United States centennial year.

This small spinning mill sold yarn and prospered. As other textile mills arose along the canal, the Globe mill expanded into a full-fledged cotton mill, where bales of cotton which entered the mill exited as cloth. Around the turn of the century, Augusta's textile industry reached an industrial plateau at about the same time the Globe Mill reached its peak size.

After World War II, new owners named the mill "Blanche" and added modern equipment. They also installed a new hydroelectric power plant run by water from the canal. During the 1960s, changes in the textile industry, as well as in Augusta's economic pattern, forced the Blanche mill to meet new restrictions and demands. Unable to meet them, it closed down in 1972.

- The Clarks' Era -

Amos K. Clark, an Augusta flour miller, was one of the few people with capital during the depression of the mid-1870s. His flour mill was one of the largest in the Southeast and in 1876 he decided to expand into cotton spinning. Another cause for this decision was the availability of cheap power, supplied by the recently enlarged Augusta Canal.¹

During 1876-77, the mill was erected adjacent the falls between the second and third levels of the canal. An old tobacco factory on the site was removed and, in its place, the new Globe mill went up. Though a small building, a two-story brick measuring 50x80 feet, it housed 1,400 spindles and other machinery to spin cotton into yarn and carpet warp. A stairwell tower stood in the center of the building's east end. Water power turned the turbine which drove the belt line mechanism. The turbine sat in a separate building, thus the belt line passed through the air to the main shaft in the mill building. The company employed 31 operatives.²

A year and a few months after the mill began operation, a fire gutted the building. Undaunted, Clark rebuilt the works as the new Globe Mill and by 1880 had increased his work force to seventy.³

The mill remained a small spinning mill through the 1880s and 1890s. An 1890 publication listed it as employing 80 hands, had 4,600 spindles, produced \$125,000 work of "yarn, etc.," annually, and consumed 25,000 bales of cotton annually.⁴

In 1899, after the death of Amos Clark, his sons incorporated the mill as the Globe Cotton Mills, Inc. and decided to expand the operation. Capitalized at \$25,000, their plans were not large-scale.⁵ Joseph C. Fargo, an Augusta cotton factor, entered the firm and became its guiding spirit through the Depression.

A year after the company organized, another fire gutted the mill. The owners were given the opportunity to modernize the entire operation. By 1904, they had refurbished the old mill, added 1,728 spindles, and built a 80x80 foot weave shed. They placed 114 new looms in the latter.⁶

The first four decades of the twentieth century saw little changes at the mill. Cotton warehouses composed the major additions.⁷

- The Silvers' Era -

In 1940, however, Philip Silver purchased the mill and named it after his wife Blanche. The Blanche Mills, Inc. tripled the size of the mill, switched from hydro-mechanical to hydroelectric power, and put in 14,000 spindles. The operation produced osnaburgs and employed 350 employees.⁸

The mill passed to Phil Silver's sons, Hill and David, following his death in 1957 and they continued operation until 1972⁹ The machinery was sold off or scrapped and the buildings are now rented as warehouse space. The turbine and generator, however, are in their original position.

The Globe mill, though a small operation, still stands as an example of the other small spinning mills once powered by the canal but since destroyed--the Shamrock, the Russell & Simmons, and the Sterling. These mills all sold their products to local mills as well as to New York markets. In addition, their operation during the nineteenth century was just part of the grand scheme to industrialize Augusta and make the city the "Lowell of the South."

Footnotes

- 1 HAER, Augusta Canal Project, Report #1, The Augusta Canal; John L. Maxwell, Pleasant A. Stovall, and T. R. Gibson, Handbook of Augusta (Augusta, 1878), p. 33.
- 2 Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Map of August, 1884, in Map Room, University of Georgia Science Library, Athens; Daily Chronicle & Sentinel, March 13, 1879; February 27, 1878.
- 3 Ibid; Daily Chronicle & Constitutionalist, January 11, 1880.
- 4 Charles C. Jones and Salem Dutcher, Memorial History of Augusta (Syracuse, New York: D. Mason & Co., 1890), p. 422.
- 5 Charters 1889-1900, p. 565-6, Record of the Richmond County Superior Court, Municipal Building, Augusta, Georgia.
- 6 Textile World, January 1902, p. 65.
- 7 Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps for Augusta, Georgia, 1904, 1923, in Map Room, University of Georgia Science Library, Athens.
- 8 Interview, Robert L. Spude with Hill L. Silver, July 5, 1977, Augusta, Georgia
- 9 Ibid.